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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Senior Research Staff on International Communism

6 March 1956

"Modifications" of Communist Doctrine
at the 20th Congress of the CPSU

General Observations

1. The 20th Congress of the CPSU has explained and codified policies and methods which had been in process of evolution since the death of Stalin. The new Soviet approach probably is the result of political as well as of doctrinal considerations; both the practical and theoretical aspects of the Soviet-Communist theses have been developed simultaneously.

2. The real importance of the 20th Congress does not consist so much in the novelty of its pronouncements as in the confirmation of its break with the crude methods of Stalin; its reaffirmation of the Marxist-Leninist faith; its restatement of unchanging long-range Communist objectives (to be achieved by changeable tactics); and an extraordinary display of self-confidence and enthusiastic expectation of victories to come. This self-confidence of the Soviet Communist leaders, their belief in the stability of their regime at home and their high hopes for a bright future of Communism elsewhere have indicated a more relaxed, less defensive mood. In turn, this mood is bound to be felt by Communists and sympathizers everywhere, particularly in the underdeveloped countries to which the Communist leadership has addressed itself with special emphasis.

Key Points of Doctrinal Re-interpretation.

Collective Leadership.

3. The key note of the statutes of the 19th Party Congress was the rise in power and influence of the Stalinist state as compared with the Communist Party which had become Stalin's personal instrument. The 20th Congress, though its statutes will not be available for some time, has completely reversed this trend. The return to Leninism has eliminated the "cult of personality" and greatly increased the influence and power of the Party apparatus. The end of Beria and his security state-within-the-state has removed limiting forces and put the state back into the hands of the Party. Moreover, the fear of recurrence of a Stalin-type dictatorship and the concomitant loss of power by the present leaders and the Party organization probably stimulated the belief among the members of the Party Presidium that collective rule and a restoration of "democratic centralism" in the USSR would now serve their purposes better and solidify their - and the Party's - position. Nevertheless, the term "collective leadership" in

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AUTH: HR 70-2

DATE: 7 Apr 82 BY: 103430

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Communist states is a euphemism. It is not government by committee in the Western sense. It may mean the dictatorship of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Party or a limitation of one-man rule by the influence of established members of the Presidium.

The Inevitability of War.

4. According to Lenin, imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, must, by its very nature, cause conflicts and wars. The thesis of the inevitability of wars between the imperialist and socialist camps is now considered to be "not a fatalistic inevitability", even though the possibility of war between the two camps has not been altogether ruled out. Three main factors are cited by the Communist leaders as justifying this doctrinal modification: (a) the growth of the political and economic strength of Communism throughout the world, (b) the increasing resistance of organized labor and the "peace-loving masses" in non-Orbit countries against the war course of capitalist leaders, and (c) the emergence of a bloc of non-committed "neutral" countries which still have ties with the West but feel sympathetically inclined toward the USSR and Communist China.

5. However, the chief rationale for the doctrinal change almost certainly is the threat of atomic war. Atomic weapons and the means of delivering them have so far not been properly explained by Communist ideology. There is no doctrinal "guidance to action" regarding the atom. In spite of statements to the contrary, Communist leaders must know that atomic war would be as dangerous to their system as they claim it would be for capitalism. Therefore, even though Western resistance to Communism were less and Communist successes in non-European areas were greater, the Soviet leaders probably would still have to resort to "peaceful coexistence" to achieve their primary objective of making the Soviet Union an invincible bulwark of Communism. Thus there can be no doubt that this modification of doctrine is no mere window dressing but rather is regarded as essential to the eventual establishment of military and economic predominance in the balance of world power.

The Different Roads to Socialism

6. The concept that only one way, the Soviet way, can lead to socialism was Stalin's. Before him, Lenin was far more flexible. He believed that while all countries will eventually become socialist, their paths toward that goal may vary. Within the Communist Orbit, the principal factors leading to the return to the Leninist formula were the example of Tito's defection and the unorthodox rise to power of the Mao regime. Outside the Orbit, the principal consideration leading to the adoption of a more realistic policy was concern over nationalistic resentment against Soviet domination and Communist Party subordination of national to Soviet interest. In "colonial and semi-colonial" countries, this policy is in fact a prerequisite to Communist support of local nationalism. Thus no basic change of doctrine is involved, merely a tactical switch from Stalinism to Neo-Leninism.

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Achievement of Socialism by "Parliamentary" Means.

7. This thesis should not be regarded as a modification of doctrine; it does not allow for "reformism" or "opportunism". Evolution will not replace revolution. The "transformation of an organ of bourgeois democracy into a genuine instrument of the peoples' will" is considered possible only in countries where capitalism is not strong and does not have at its disposal a "huge military and police apparatus". If, however, capitalism is strong, "the transition to socialism will be attended by a sharp revolutionary struggle". These statements by Soviet leaders seem to indicate that achievement of socialism by "parliamentary" means is thought to be feasible primarily in underdeveloped countries such as Indonesia. However, Khrushchev, Mikoyan and others made it clear that a parliamentary victory of a Communist-Socialist United Front is regarded as a means for avoiding civil war and implied that it must be followed by the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat, the "vanguard". Thus while Khrushchev complains that "our enemies depict us Leninists as advocates of violence always and everywhere", he admits that "revolutionary transformation" distinguishes Marxism from "reformism" or "opportunism". Violent struggle is not always indicated to overthrow the "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie", but it cannot be ruled out. And Mikoyan adds: "Revolution, be it peaceful or violent, is always revolution", for the capitalists will not voluntarily give up.

8. Thus the thesis of socialist victory through parliamentary means probably signifies little more than a rationale for United Front efforts and an attempt to induce the social democratic elements into accepting Communist blandishments. As respectability of local Parties is reestablished in internal affairs, it is supplemented by the Soviet "diplomatic" approach in international relations.

Significance of the 20th Congress Doctrines.

9. The statements of the Communist leaders have demonstrated that the conceptual framework of Communism has not changed, that the confidence of the leaders in the wisdom of Communist ideology has been renewed and that faith in the eventual triumph of World Communism has been greatly strengthened. Revolutionary transformation of non-Communist society, dictatorship of the proletariat, and world-wide establishment of Communism remain unalterable objectives. The return to Leninism cannot be construed as an indication of forthcoming concessions on issues in dispute with the Western powers. It merely permits the employment of subtler tactics. This mid-century Neo-Leninism is certainly not less ruthless than Stalinism and is far more dangerous for the Free World.

10. It is significant that the 20th Party Congress revealed a strong effort to reinvigorate the CPSU ideologically. An attempt was made to keep Marxist-Leninist discourses less stereotyped and more "creative". Communist successes have unquestionably enhanced the standing of the Communist prophets

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and their scriptures, and the skillful adaptation of their theses to contemporary conditions may have rekindled some enthusiasm for ideology in the USSR.

11. It is too early to gauge the effect of the 20th Congress upon the leadership of Communist-ruled nations and Parties outside the USSR. However, adjustments will almost certainly be made to follow the Soviet lead. This will probably cause embarrassment, and perhaps the removal, of Party leaders who may be reluctant to reverse their Stalinist methods without a period of transition. Moreover, the concept of "different roads to socialism" may cause the CPSU to permit more freedom of movement to the components of International Communism. This in turn would increase the difficulty of estimating Soviet intentions and courses of action as they may be reflected outside the USSR, and specifically in the Free World's CPs. The real depth and breadth of the doctrinal and methodological modifications may become more apparent as Communist history and textbooks are rewritten. The new versions of the "Short Course" and "Political Economy", the syllabus of the new Party training program and the results of the proposed boarding schools for the future elite, as well as the new Party statutes will give more definite indications. However, any changes will probably remain well within the established framework of Communism in order to prevent confusion or upheaval.

12. The present Soviet tactical approach and doctrinal modifications will increase the effectiveness of Communist manipulations in Afro-Asian areas. Further success in making Communist ideology respectable may enhance Soviet political and economic support programs. This approach will quiet many of the apprehensions among the intelligentsia regarding Communist totalitarian police state methods; it will make the clamor for Communist-Socialist unity more plausible and further decrease Western influence. By following CPSU advice and compromising for the time being, the Communist Parties, in politically less sophisticated areas, may be able to hide their conspiratorial nature and succeed in infiltrating the body politic of their countries.

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